‘Grow more wheat’ campaign launched in Rawalpindi

By Our Staff Reporter

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Agriculture Department and Pir Mehar Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi on Friday launched a ‘Grow more wheat campaign’ in the Rawalpindi division.

The campaign aims to enhance wheat production and promote sustainable agricultural practices across the six districts of Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Murree and Talagang.

The campaign will continue until November 16.

A meeting in this regard was held under the chairmanship of the Secretary Agriculture Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahoo in which the vice chancellors of Punjab’s agricultural universities and the DG agriculture (extension) were also present. Speaking on the occasion, the secretary agriculture said all means should be utilised to make the campaign effective.

Vice Chancellor of the arid agriculture university Prof Dr Qamaruz Zaman emphasised the vital importance of wheat as a staple crop in Potohar region.

He said wheat is one of the most important crops cultivated in the region.

“Our goal is to guide farmers on improved sowing techniques and best agronomic practices to achieve higher yields. PMAS-AAUR in collaboration with the government of Punjab is fully committed to providing farmers with research-based knowledge, practical training and technical support to ensure food security and boost productivity,” he said.

Director Agriculture (extension) Rawalpindi Syed Shahid Iftikhar Bukhari emphasised that increasing wheat production would play a crucial role in strengthening the national economy.

This campaign represents a collective effort between government, institutions and our hardworking farmers to increase wheat production.

Dean Faculty of Agriculture Prof Dr Tariq Mukhtar said 45 field teams had been organised, comprising 450 students supervised by agricultural experts and faculty members.

These teams will visit different areas of the six districts to provide on-site guidance to farmers regarding modern wheat cultivation techniques, efficient use of water resources, soil fertility management, and the adoption of modern agricultural machinery.

He said the campaign serves as a bridge between academia and the farming community, allowing students to gain hands-on field experience while supporting farmers in adopting innovative and science-based agricultural practices.

No let-up in number of dengue cases

RAWALPINDI: Despite the temperature dropping to six degrees Celsius, there is no let-up in the number of dengue patients in Rawalpindi.

As many as 13 patients reported to three government-run hospitals on Friday. The fresh cases took the city’s overall denguetally from July to November 7 to 1,436.

Most denguepatients arrived in Holy Family Hospital, Satellite Town while Benazir Bhutto Hospital, Murree Road and Rawalpindi Teaching Hospital, Raja Bazaar admitted 22 cases. Most of these cases were reported from the city, especially Gawalmandi, Mohanpura, Khayaban-i-Sir Syed and Dhoke Ratta areas located by Leh Nullah.

Doctors fear the denguevirus would continue in the city till November end. “Last year, the hospitals received patients till December end and this year too the District Health Authority failed to take measures to eliminate the mosquito,” a senior doctor at the Holy Family Hospital said. — Staff Reporter

Anniversary of Pakistan-Indonesia diplomatic relations celebrated

By Jamal Shahid

AN Indonesian troupe presents a cultural dance at a ceremony held to commemorate their country’s 80th Independence Day in Islamabad on Thursday night. — Photo by Mohammad Asim

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Indonesia has hosted a grand reception to mark the 75th anniversary of the country’s diplomatic relations with Pakistan.

The celebrations also marked the 80th Independence Day of Indonesia and the anniversary of the Indonesian Armed Forces.

“The event celebrates the enduring friendship and trust shared by the two brotherly nations since 1949,” said Indonesian Ambassador Chandra W. Sukotjo, who welcomed his guests, including Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry, federal ministers, Asean ambassadors, envoys from friendly countries, senior officers of the Pakistan Armed Forces and representatives of international organisations.

In his remarks, Ambassador Chandra Sukotjo highlighted the deep-rooted and resilient ties between Indonesia and Pakistan, emphasising that the 75-year journey reflected mutual respect, solidarity and shared values. “Today’s celebration recharges our spirit to further strengthen and translate our longstanding relations into more concrete cooperation for the benefit of our peoples,” he said.

He noted that business partnerships and people-to-people exchanges remained vital in keeping the bilateral relationship vibrant and relevant for younger generations.

The evening featured a colourful cultural programme organised by the Indonesian embassy’s women association, with joint performances by Indonesian and Pakistani youth, and a traditional showcase by Paguyuban Citra, a cultural troupe from Indonesia led by former minister Madam Linda Amalia Gumelar.

The traditional dances, fashion show, sounds and the flavours were like a kaleidoscope of colours. As one diplomat described it while appreciating the vibrant culture, “the celebration was like exploring the rich heritage of traditional Indonesian dresses and dances”.

Ambassador Chandra Sukotjo expressed gratitude to all contributors for making the event successful, ending with the words, “Indonesia-Pakistan, Dosti Zindabad.”

In his remarks Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry congratulated the people and government of Indonesia on celebrating what he called three remarkable milestones – 80th Independence Day of Indonesia, the 80th Anniversary of the Indonesian Armed Forces and 75 years of friendship between the two countries.

He said the progress of Indonesia was an inspiring example of resilience and prosperity.

“We have stood on each others’ sides in times of challenges and happiness. Our bilateral cooperation continues to flourish in all domains with each passing year,” he said, adding that over the past seven decades, ties between Indonesia and Pakistan had grown beyond government to government contact into strong people to people connection.

PML-N leader urges AJK premier to resign or dissolve assembly

By Tariq Naqash

MUZAFFARABAD: Former Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) prime minister and parliamentary leader of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Raja Farooq Haider, on Friday said the government and administration had lost control over affairs, plunging the state into a deep administrative crisis.

In an informal conversation with journalists at the Central Press Club, Muzaffarabad, he asserted that the police and civil administration were “demoralised and hesitant to perform their duties amid prevailing political uncertainty”.

“Azad Kashmir is facing the worst administrative paralysis. The police and administration are dispirited, and there is no one to listen to them,” Mr Haider remarked.

Recalling Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwarul Haq’s oft-repeated claims of upholding democratic principles, the former premier said once 27 lawmakers had publicly shown their support for the no-confidence motion, Mr Haq should have demonstrated moral courage and resigned on his own.

“There is no denying that Mr Haq has lost his majority in the Legislative Assembly and, therefore, no moral justification remains for him to cling to office,” he said, urging the premier to either dissolve the assembly or step down to “prevent further damage to the system”.

Mr Haider said the ongoing situation had inflicted “irreparable harm” on the region’s politics, adding that the uncertainty reflected the indecisiveness of political leadership.

“In the past, no-confidence motions were moved, but the situation never deteriorated to this extent. The current state of affairs is highly damaging for Azad Kashmir,” he warned.

The veteran leader said the matter had lingered due to weak political leadership, otherwise a no-confidence motion would not have become such a big issue.

Answering a question, Mr Haider maintained that the ministers who signed the motion against the prime minister should have resigned first.

Discreetly criticising the Pakistan People’s Party (PPP), he regretted that despite publicly supporting the motion, its ministers continued to enjoy official perks and remained in the cabinet. “They should have resigned first,” he reiterated.

Mr Haider said he had advised his party’s regional president Shah Ghulam Qadir to secure resignations from the party’s ministers, since the PML-N had already announced its support for the no-confidence motion.

“Two of our ministers have already resigned, and I wonder what the remaining two are waiting for. They should do so without further delay,” he said.

Calling for fresh elections as the only viable solution to the political turmoil, Mr Haider, however, cautioned that the prevailing environment could also affect the electoral process.

Upgraded Golra railway station inaugurated

RAWALPINDI: After the Rawalpindi railway station, Pakistan Railways has renovated the Golra station and added a safe and smart system for surveillance and improved the ticketing system.

At a ceremony, Railway Minister for Railways Hanif Abbasi inaugurated the upgraded railway station.

The railway station at Golra was established in 1881 and was a historical landmark of the railway heritage of the Indian subcontinent. It has century-old trees, historical railway sleepers and rare travel equipment.

Speaking on the occasion, the minister highlighted the recent reforms in the railways. He said digitisation of the railways was underway as per the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.

“Safe and smart stations, cashless tickets and free Wifi have been launched in collaboration with Frontier Works Organisation (FWO) and Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB),” he said.

Moreover, a freight online system, V-bridges, Rabita app and 117 call centre would facilitate the passengers and visitors to the historical station.

“Information desks, escalators, commercial passenger lounges and quality food provision have been ensured in railway stations. Outsourcing of various services is increasing revenue and ensuring transparency in Pakistan Railways,” he said.

Apart from this, the minister said, Pakistan Railways will also protect the rights of railway employees during outsourcing of railway schools, hospitals and rest houses.

He said maximum revenue will be generated from a transparent auction of the railway land across the country. The minister said that special attention was being paid to regional connectivity and in this regard an Islamabad-Tehran-Istanbul train service will be launched by end of the current year.

“Kazakhstan has completed preparations for laying the missing section of the railway track up to Chaman. An agreement has been reached for railway connectivity between Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” he said. — Aamir Yasin

Home Department seeks proposals for police stations’ restructuring

By Mohammad Asghar

RAWALPINDI: In a bid to improve policing effectiveness and make police services more accessible, the Punjab Home Department has sought proposals from all the divisional police chiefs on the rationalisation of police station jurisdictions to better serve the public.

The move also aims at establishment of new police stations or police posts, where needed. The main objective of the rationalisation of police station jurisdictions is to ensure effective and accessible services tailored to the specific needs of an area. The basis of jurisdiction is the defined territorial area within which a police station has the authority.

These boundaries are typically established by senior police officers or provincial governments through official orders and rules. The goal of rationalisation is to improve enforcement efficacy. This includes ensuring that officers can quickly reach any site within their authority and effectively manage their workload.

The provincial police chief in a communication to the regional police Rawalpindi stated that the competent authority had decided to carry out rationalisation of the jurisdictions of police stations within respective regions and districts to facilitate both the general public and the police department.

Following the Home Department’s directives, the RPO Rawalpindi and the city police officer (CPO) have asked all SSPs concerned to submit proposals and suggestions regarding establishment of new police stations or police posts till Saturday (today) to the CPO.

A senior police officer said due to the urban expansion, population growth and for effective policing, the creation of new police stations was needed in the Rawalpindi district as well. Presently, there are 30 police stations in the district in addition to police posts, some of which are located away from the public reach.

He said though they had not formally forwarded the proposals, they had discussed the need for establishing new police stations in Rawalpindi in recent meetings.

He said they were of the view that the Saddar Barooni police station, which is located adjacent to the Police Lines Headquarters and opposite to the Civil Lines and Women Police Station, should be shifted to Adiala since its present location is not accessible for the citizens.

Another police official said in addition to Sadiqabad police station, two more police stations should be established - one in Shakrial and the other in Khanna area. Likewise, two police stations should be established in Katarian and Pindora areas.

He said it had been proposed that the Adiala Chowki should be converted into a police station (Saddar Barooni) to ensure citizens can easily reach it.

Besides the shifting of Saddar Barooni police, the bifurcation of Sadiqabad police station is also under consideration. Moreover, establishment of a new police station in Bahria Town Phase VII and VIII was also under consideration since the two phases of the society have expanded into large areas.

Indian devotees return to Gurdwara Punja Sahib after border reopening

By Amjad Iqbal

TAXILA: The Sikh temple at Gurdwara Punja Sahib on Friday echoed with slogans by Indian devotees as they crossed into Pakistan for the first time since deadly May clashes had closed the land border between the two countries.

Over 2, 000 Indian Sikh pilgrims arrived here to offer their rituals in connection with the 556 birth celebrations of Baba Guru Nanak - the founder of the Sikh religion.

Thousands of devotees, barefoot in reverence for sanctity of the land that is the birthplace of the founder of their religion, poured into the temple. Men dressed in orange robes and swords in their belts along with women and children dressed in colourful attire came to offer their religious rituals, including Akhand Paath (uninterrupted recitation of scriptures), Matha Tekna (bowing before the shrine), sacred bathing and Shabad Kirtan (devotional singing).

The rituals began early in the morning on Friday when hundreds of pilgrims bathed in the gurdwara’s holy pond. The gurdwara was lit up and decorated with flowers, banners, flags and posters depicting Sikh rituals. Several congregations were held to recall Baba Guru Nanak’s message of peace, love and brotherhood. Special prayers were offered, and hymns from the Guru Granth Sahib were sung. Pilgrims pledged to comply with the teachings of the guru.

Free sweets and langar, community lunches were also offered. Men, women and children participated in the karseva as service to the community in which they prepared food and distributed it in the Guru ka Langar.

Prominent Sikh leaders, including Jathedar Akal Takht Kuldip Singh Gurgaj, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee leader Bibi Gurinder Kaur and Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee leader Ravinder Singh Sweeta were among those who arrived from India to attend the celebrations. A significant number of Sikh pilgrims from around the world, including United States, Canada and Australia, as well as different parts of Pakistan, are participating in the religious festivities.

Tarnjeet Kaur, 62, from Amritsar termed her visit to the Sikh temple in Hassanabdal a turning point in her life as it was her last wish to touch the stone imprint with the founder of her religion.

“It seems I am in my dreams as a few weeks ago it seemed impossible for us to visit Pakistan as deadly clashes in May had closed the land border between two countries suspending previous two important pilgrimages in the month of June.”

Bibi Gurinder Kaur, leader of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, expressed deep reverence for the sacred sites in Pakistan. “This land holds the spirit of our Guru. For us, it is as holy as Makkah and Madina are to Muslims,” she said.

Kuldeep Singh Gurgaj, group leader of Akal Takht, praised Pakistan’s efforts in preserving Sikh religious sites.

“We are always received with respect and love. The care shown to our holy places is deeply appreciated,” he noted. “We are grateful to the Pakistani government, particularly the Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) for making arrangements for the protection of Gurdwaras in Pakistan,” he said.

Dr Sardar Balvinder Singh urged for the opening of Kartarpur corridor as now pilgrimage relations between two countries normalised. “Pakistan is the only country where the government spends millions annually on Sikh gurdwaras’ decoration,” said Permeet Kaur from Ludhiana. She said she was overjoyed to see the upkeep of their worship places and facilities provided to the Sikh community in Pakistan.

INDIAN Sikh pilgrims perform their rituals at Punja Sahib in Hassanabdal on Friday. — Dawn